



**Remarks by Dr. Rajiv Shah
Administrator, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)**

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DR. RAJIV SHAH: Thank you, Marshall.

And good morning. How is everyone? It's wonderful to see such a great group come out so early today. So thank you very much.

And a special thanks of course to Catherine and Dan, who have really made this issue a top priority for everyone in this development business in this town. And we continue to look at and count on the leadership of the Chicago Council and of the team sitting here in the years to come. So thank you very much.

I'm very appreciative that both Congressman McGovern and Rep. DeLauro will be here. Congressman McGovern is here already. Thank you very much. We're really appreciative of your leadership in the House and now more than ever need that leadership, to get this initiative fully funded. So we appreciate your being here.

And I'd be remiss if I didn't mention Senators Casey, Lugar and Kerry, who have shown so much personal commitment to this that, in my confirmation process, they made quite clear that they expect - and we intend to carry out on their expectations - that they expect real leadership on this issue and quickly.

Last year, the number of people that - suffering from chronic hunger topped 1 billion, increasing for the first time in decades, but it has been consistently increasing for the last few years.

The food crisis, the global financial crisis, have all contributed to this rise in chronic hunger. But let's be honest: so did years of drift and lack of attention from the global community and from the donor community, including the United States of America.

The Chicago Council report, which has served as very much a road map for this effort, asks the U.S. to lead a second Green Revolution. And we completely agree. The first Green Revolution, a term coined by a USAID administrator, William Gaud, succeeded in lifting incomes and lessening hunger in large parts of the world.

In 1979, agricultural programs made up 18 percent of all foreign assistance. By 2007, that number was 3.5 percent. In the early '80s, agricultural productivity growth in developing countries topped 3 percent per year. By a few years ago, that number was below 1 percent, and not enough to keep up with the rate of population growth in precisely the places that were most affected.

The human effects of this neglect are clear. Increasing hunger, chronically undernourished children who are unable to learn and who suffer from a lifetime of lost opportunity because of what happens to their nutritional status in the first two years of their life.

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But these effects also threaten our own global stability. We've seen time after time, examples of food riots, instability and conflict as communities fight over scarce productive resources.

I came most recently from Darfur, arriving back last night. And every single person I spoke to, of the hundreds of thousands that were in the IDP camps I visited, had agricultural backgrounds and sought again an agricultural future, but their access to viable, productive resources has been limited severely by the conflict.

So we know agricultural development is a springboard for broader economic development and we know food security is the foundation for peace and opportunity, and therefore, our own national security.

This administration's plan and this president's plan for a more peaceful world center on enhancing prosperity in our partner countries by elevating development and better integrating it with diplomacy and defense as part of our foreign policy.

That is why President Obama pledged in his inaugural address that we would work alongside the people of lower-income countries to make their farms flourish.

And that is why Secretary Clinton together with Sec.-Gen. Ban Ki-Moon last September drew together leaders from more than 130 countries around the world for a special session at the U.N. General Assembly, asking each of them to make commitments to this global cause. And that's why we're here today.

Through this Feed the Future initiative, we are investing the talents of experts throughout our government, working closely with the State Department, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the USTR and the Peace Corps in this effort.

Secretary Vilsack will be here later today to tell you about new partnerships with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. His personal leadership of food security at home and abroad and USDA's strong commitment is critical to this effort.

Through Feed the Future, we will be investing at least \$3.5 billion over a three-year period to reprioritize agriculture and malnutrition and to reduce hunger and insecurity.

And directly combined with the investments of our partner countries, we believe this will reach 40 million people over 10 years, increasing their incomes significantly - by more than 10 percent a year. And we expect to reach 25 million children directly with nutritional interventions that will prevent stunting in 10 million kids.

And these numbers are conservative estimates. They don't count potential gains from agricultural research, they don't count the outcomes of potential increased private-sector investment and they don't count the tremendous welfare gains that can be experienced when food prices go down in countries where populations spend 70, 80, sometimes 90 percent of total income securing food for their families.

This initiative seeks to create a modern aid mechanism whose architecture is based on a set of principles articulated first by President Obama at L'Aquila last year, and then endorsed by 192 member-states in Rome.

The most important principle is the first one: that we will follow country-led and country-owned plans. We know even the most expert donor work is limited in its ability to create transformative impact. Country-led efforts are the only way to amplify the impact of donor projects and reach real scale.

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For years there's been talk about country-led planning, so when I first got here, I asked, well, what's new about this? How is this actually different?

The truth is, we're now beginning to see results. In Rwanda, they recognized they needed a comprehensive approach to agriculture, so they assembled key stakeholders, developed a plan and completed a thorough technical review just this December.

As of April 15th, Rwanda's \$848-million proposal is substantially funded, with \$275 million in assistance from international partners.

I don't think it's a mere coincidence that, since 2006, when this planning process began in Rwanda, that they've experienced real increases in agricultural sector growth, real increases in agricultural total production and a nearly 50 percent increase in domestic and in expenditure investment in the agriculture sector.

Liberia is similarly off to a fast start, from a very tough starting point, and I believe President Sirleaf will be here later today to describe that progress.

By the end of 2010, we should have 15 African country investment plans. These plans will represent countries with a total population of almost 650 million people, and these must serve as the basis for our engagement.

We see similar progress in other parts of the world. I look forward next week to visiting Bangladesh and visiting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina as she leads the final stages of their planning process.

My colleague Cheryl Mills, who will be here shortly, has worked closely with Haiti's top leaders as they've made agricultural development a core part of their reconstruction and their future.

These plans and this political leadership show the signs of strength that we are looking for. Clear investment priorities: Countries are showing that they pick specific breadbaskets, specific areas within a country and specific crop value chains and say that those are the investment priorities everybody should organize themselves around.

Strong commitment from the highest level of leadership: agriculture ministries and ministers, but also ministers of finance, vice presidents, prime minister and heads of state.

Transformational goals: The goal cannot simply be to reach X number of farmers through project implementation, but to create viable and energetic market-oriented agricultural economies.

And most importantly, the involvement of all stakeholders, especially civil society, NGOs and the private sector. For us, these plans are the basis for increased investment.

But we all know that it's not just about increased investment. It's about the quality and the focus of how those resources are spent, which brings me to the second principle agreed to at L'Aquila: taking a comprehensive approach to food security across the whole value chain from - I think the term is - from the research lab to the table.

That comprehensive approach starts with a restructured research agenda. To that end, we are already working with other donors to support the CGIAR in its critical reform effort. Its new mega-programs will focus on

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priority staple crops, reinvest in core breeding, which is its core area of expertise, and integrate systems research for production systems such as East African highland systems and South Asian cereal-based systems.

We support this effort fully. As Secretary Vilsack will discuss later today, we are leveraging USDA's research capabilities as well, by expanding our direct funding partnerships with the Agricultural Research Service and co-funding research through the new National Institute of Food and Agriculture in areas such as wheat stem rust, livestock diseases and abiotic stress such as drought and heat tolerance.

And we are asking our land-grant university partners to push the frontiers of productivity through greater focus. Our current eight CRISP programs cover over 115 research activities and we seek to focus this work on a smaller set of core Feed the Future research priorities even as we significantly increase our investment to these partners.

In countries, we will expand efforts to develop robust country regulatory systems so farmers themselves can choose which technologies are most appropriate and which ones they need to feed their families and lift their communities out of poverty.

But to really reach farmers with the fruits of these efforts, we are directing each of our country teams to prioritize investments in national agricultural research systems - where AGRA has been a real leader - and in modern extension systems, with a focus on training and hiring female extension workers to reach women farmers.

But increasing agricultural productivity will only get us so far. Last week, I was in Kenya, and I opened the paper, and on the second page in color photographs was pictures of unhappy Kenyan farmers who had worked hard to get a bumper maize crop this year, but now because of heavy rains, poor drying conditions and a lack of market access have high levels of aflatoxin contamination that could wipe out the gains that they expected from their hard work.

In fact, an initial USAID survey of draft African agricultural plans shows that developing effective markets is their top priority.

We have considerable capabilities in this area, and we've done a lot of project work to solve this problem. But too often, our investments have resulted in a collection of projects that fail to transform a value chain and leave a lasting, market-oriented agricultural system.

So we will do things differently. First, we're getting feedback from the private sector on our investments, and aligning investments in grain storage, market-information systems and feeder roads with private-sector priorities.

Second, we will refocus efforts to increase agricultural business investments in priority countries. We have a range of tools, including philanthropic or corporate partnerships; the use of the Development Credit Authority, which provides expanded access to bank-lending; and grant mechanisms that effectively allow us to provide small-and medium-sized firms with equity finance.

The DCA alone, the Development Credit Authority, has unlocked more than \$2 billion in private-sector lending, and could be used far more aggressively in agriculture. So we are recruiting local banks and local agricultural businesses to participate.

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Third, we are encouraging more creative partnerships with large-scale buyers of food to create the type of durable market demand and supply-chain management that could be the basis for greater investment. Examples range from Wal-Mart's efforts to help Central American farmers improve post-harvest handling to similar programs that link cocoa buyers to small farmers through the West African Sustainable Tree Crop Program.

Fourth, and last but certainly not least, is our effort to use regional investments to actually implement the trade and investment corridors that so many African partners have asked for and called their top integrated, regional agriculture priority.

But we know the people who matter most aren't the financiers or the agriculture ministers or the assistance workers and partners. They are the women farmers who are the untapped solution to this problem.

Women produce 60 to 80 percent of the food in countries where we work. And when women control gains in income, they're far more likely to spend those gains improving their families' access to health, education and nutrition.

For years, we've talked about the importance of women. We all have. But now, with leadership from Secretary Clinton and Ambassador Melanne Verveer, we are focusing on women in everything we do.

We start by focusing on those crops such as sweet potatoes and legumes that we know disproportionately enhance women's standing, women's production and women's incomes.

And we're working to ensure that women get equal access to services and support, such as financial services that preferentially target women and extension services delivered by female extension workers.

To make this happen, we've asked each of our country teams to expand investments in women's producer networks and expand fellowship programs, such as the award program in Kenya for women who pursue degrees in agriculture and research careers thereafter.

But we also are including nutrition interventions that target women and children with high-intensity feeding programs for children in the minus-9-to-24 high-risk age group with micronutrient supplementation that includes both supplementation programs and biofortification programs through the HarvestPlus effort, and school feeding efforts through new partnerships with our Global Health Initiative and the McGovern-Dole school feeding programs.

At L'Aquila, we highlighted the need for multilateral organizations to be part of the solution. The Rome agencies and the community on food security have responded strongly with tremendous leadership.

And the multidonor trust fund at the World Bank is now active. Its steering committee will be composed of equal numbers of donors and recipient countries. And they recently committed to making all of their executive sessions open and fully transparent to all partners. In total, \$880 million has already been formally pledged to this fund from the U.S., Spain, Canada, South Korea and the Gates Foundation.

To ensure that all of these investments I've outlined are as high-impact as possible, we're working closely with key agencies within the U.S. government. And we are reforming the fundamental way we work.

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We're developing our own multiyear investment strategies so that we can be more honest and more effective partners with countries and in-country partners for the long term. And we are coordinating with other donors through both intensive diplomacy and operational partnerships in each of the priority countries.

And while in the past we've done retrospective program evaluation, going forward, we will invest in collecting baseline data from the start, with a focus on measuring women's incomes, rates of child malnutrition and agricultural production.

I've turned to Ambassador Bill Garvelink to oversee the execution of the Food Security Initiative within USAID as our deputy coordinator for development. He is restructuring our more than 130 agricultural experts around the world and across the agencies into a single food-security effort.

Bill, are you here? Can you stand up? I know he's here. There he is. Okay, good.

He'll be working closely with Ambassador Pat Haslach, who will serve as our deputy coordinator for diplomacy at the State Department and who will make sure that this partnership remains a global priority because we simply won't eliminate hunger without that.

So how can you help? If you're here representing a partner country, we will follow your lead. Once you commit to a comprehensive plan, we will commit to helping bring the global community together to support you in its execution. We will have a single point of contact in your country to coordinate U.S. government efforts and engage with your leaders.

If you're here representing an NGO or a USAID implementing partner, your expertise will continue to be indispensable. Thank you for reviewing plans, coming to meetings, sharing your thoughts and offering your advice.

We now ask that you align that expertise behind country priorities and have specific strategies in every project or program for building real local capacity throughout the agriculture and nutrition sectors, as many of you already do. And we want to work with you in each project to maximize the amounts of resources and taxpayer dollars that are spent that get invested in countries versus resources that get redirected back to Washington.

If you're from the private sector, tell us what countries and donors can do to reduce constraints on business operations. And please explore with us whether our tools to encourage investment - some of the ones I mentioned earlier - would help you make the commitment to invest greater resources in these specific value chains and countries.

If you're in Congress - (chuckles) - we need you now more than ever to help fully fund this initiative. To ensure that all stakeholders understand how they can get involved, we're starting an e-newsletter that will be provided and available on our new website, www.feedthefuture.gov.

We'll also have a "get involved" tab on that, and I'm told we have 10 people standing behind that tab. I'm not exactly sure what that means. But we have 10 people, so that we will be able to direct you to a specific country point of leadership or a specific sector - NGO, private sector - point of leadership so that you can plug in and stay connected because this really is a global effort.

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But by far, the most important thing that everyone in this room can do is hold each others' feet to the fire. Like the American people, like the president and the secretary of state and like the staff of all participating partners and like you, I am acutely aware that today a lack of food will lead to the death of approximately 25,000 people. We are gathered here today because we know that doesn't need to happen.

Thank you. (Applause.)

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